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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with President of
Russia (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Putin

Notetakers: Jeff Blair, Clarence Johnson,
Jenna Galyean, and Chris Gilmore.

Interpreter: Peter Afanasenko

DATE, TIME June 9, 2003, 1:39 - 1:55 p.m. and
2:05 - 2:08 p.m. EDT

AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Good day. (U)

President Putin: Dobriy den, George. I'm very glad to hear from
you. (U)

The President: Thanks for calling. (U)

President Putin: Thank you, too, for having answered so quickly.
I remember our meeting in St. Petersburg and Evian, especially
our meeting in St. Petersburg, and I think we have sent a very
positive message to the world. (U)

The President: Yes, we did. (U)

President Putin: Now, about my possible visit to the United
States. Our foreign ministers have agreed preliminarily on 26
and 27 September. As far as I understand, you have also agreed
on these days, so we can say okay to these days. (U)

The President: Perfect. (U)

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Classified by: Gregory L. Schulte

Reason: 1.5(d)

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(President Putin: I plan to go via New York and speak at the U.N. Now, the main thing, which was the cause of my calling you. First of all, I would like to congratulate you on the quite effective work on the Middle East. I can't imagine how hard it was. And it's even more assuring to see that the progress is here and is evident. Well, in fact, you have succeeded to make the first step, which is always the hardest. So, I would like to hear from you a firsthand assessment, something new, some details. Having in mind that we are now to work together in the Quartet, and to agree upon our future movements and actions. Of course, we will provide all possible assistance to the Palestinian Prime Minister, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, and we will stay in contact with the Israelis. Tomorrow we have here the Israeli foreign minister, and I think we should not forget about the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. Coming back to my initial question, I would like to hear details you can cite about the meetings.

(The President: Sure. Thank you, Vladimir. First of all, I had a very interesting meeting with Crown Prince Abdallah. Interestingly, in the course of the meeting, he recognized that there is money coming out of the kingdom to fund terrorist groups, and he talked eloquently about preventing money from coming out of Saudi Arabia to fund terror. He actually mentioned Chechnya. I, of course, brought it up in the context of money funding al-Qaida and Hamas and Hizballah. At any rate, I think we're making progress over there. I know you're skeptical of Saudi Arabia, but I think you would have been encouraged by his assessment. Unfortunately, not everybody in the kingdom agrees with him. We just have to keep working on this issue. Secondly, the main objectives of the meetings were, of course, to really bring Abbas into the international spotlight and to let Sharon and Abbas have further conversation, as well as their Cabinets, so they can learn to trust each other. In a private meeting with the Palestinians, we told them we expect them to develop a security force, and we told them that we, the international community, the Quartet, want to help in the development of the security force. Dahlan needs to implement it. Sharon is confident that his friends, that's me and you, will not put him in a position where he has to sacrifice the security of Israel. Our discussions with the Israelis must continue to remind them that Abbas has publicly declared that he is interested in fighting off the terror that decreases Israel's security. So I think we made progress. Of course, by not having Arafat there we strengthened Abbas. And it makes Sharon and his government much more willing to make concessions such as more money back to the Palestinians, and more travel for the Palestinians. He's going to knock down some illegal outposts, so that's positive. What's not positive is Abbas is not firmly in control, and the process,

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or the picture, caused the terrorists inside the Palestinian Authority to denounce the roadmap, to denounce the Quartet, and take military action. So the message from the international community has got to be a strong condemnation of those who reject the process. The European community must put Hamas on the terrorist list. They denounced what we are trying to achieve. Overall, though, I am optimistic. And you're absolutely right about Syria and Lebanon. We must all send a clear message to Asad that he must close down and get rid of the terrorist groups that are headquartered in Damascus. Of course, the other center for trouble in the region is Iran, and I want to thank you for your strong statements at the G8 on the Iranian nuclear program. The IAEA has condemned it strongly, and we need to combine our voices to condemn this program. All in all, I think we're making progress, and I'm most grateful for your phone call. Of course, we'll stay in touch as we work together. Finally, on June 12, I will be celebrating my father's 79th birthday, and you will be celebrating your national day. I want to congratulate you on that. (S)

President Putin: So two national holidays. The birthday of your father and our national day. (U)

The President: Listen, thank you for calling, Vladimir. (U)

President Putin: George, just two little observations. I don't know whether Mr. Sharon talked to you about this. He and some other Israeli leaders think that Abbas is not strong enough, that he is quite a weak leader, but today we don't have anybody else. We should keep in mind Arafat, and we shouldn't forget about him, but we should develop our contacts with Abbas and we should upgrade his status. (S)

The President: Absolutely, Vladimir. (U)

President Putin: Now, about Iran. You asked us to talk and to work with the Iranian side concerning the terrorists of al-Qaida, and we have launched this work. (S)

The President: Thank you. (U)

President Putin: We have confirmation now from Iran that in Iran there are some terrorists from al-Qaida. We will continue our work with the Iranians to expel these terrorists from Iran and return them to their native lands. Sergey Ivanov will inform Rice in more detail, and they will continue their work. Thank you once again. (S)

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The President: Vladimir, I just wanted them to get you back on the phone so I could say thank you and I'm looking forward to seeing you. (U)

President Putin: Great. We are also preparing for Camp David, and I also would like to send my best regards to Laura. (U)

The President: The same back to Ludmilla. I'll see you at Camp David and we'll have a great time. (U)

President Putin: Thank you once more, and I would like to congratulate you again on your success in the Middle East. (U)

The President: Well, we'll work together. (U)

President Putin: Good-bye. Thank you. (U)

The President: Good-bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --

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